



South Carolina and The WestEd Program for Infant Toddler Caregivers

Beginning in 1999 Infant Toddler Quality Funds from the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) were used to improve the South Carolina infant and toddler system through grants to private and public ABC Child Care Providers. These grants allowed for minor renovations, purchase of materials and equipment and funding for staff to lower staff child ratios. Grants have continued to be awarded each year.

To insure wise spending of these grants to improve quality, the ABC Child Care Program identified a system-wide need for training/education specific to the needs of infants and toddlers. South Carolina's initiative for infant and toddler professional development was rooted in a series of Early Childhood Summits. The Summits provided a wonderful opportunity to bring together South Carolina's resources on a common project to upgrade our state's expertise in infant and toddler care through a new partnership among the WestEd Program for Infant/Toddler Caregivers (PITC), the University of South Carolina (USC) and the ABC Child Care Program that administers the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF).

The first step in building this infrastructure, was for the ABC Program to begin an Infant and Toddler Leadership initiative to build a cadre of individuals from colleges and universities, state agencies, Head Start, First Steps, CCR & R statewide with infant and toddler caregiving expertise. The first phase of this leadership initiative began with West Ed Program for Infant and Toddler Caregivers (PITC) Faculty from Sausalito, California coming to South Carolina to provide Certification for Modules I,II,III, and IV of PITC in partnership with University of South Carolina which provided the graduate credit. The goal was to create a "cadre" of 45 faculty, agency staff, and others (private, public and faith based) who train and educate caregivers and directors in South Carolina through certification in PITC Modules I and II (summer 2001) and Modules III and IV (summer of 2002). This cadre represents the geographic regions of the state and cuts across private/public/agency lines to build a resource of "experts" in South Carolina to meet the long-term needs of our state for this infant/toddler provider population.

Each graduate course participant had an individual action plan to show how they shared their newly acquired knowledge from PITC as a result of this initiative. College faculty have revised existing courses and/or implemented new courses on infant and toddler caregiving. South Carolina now has colleges "reading from the same page" in their infant/toddler course offerings and an infusion of the PITC materials in course offerings, broadening our state's knowledge base of infant/toddler development and implications for group care. Other results of this 2-year partnership include a wide variety of training/conference presentations, technical assistance and mentors that are now available to private/public/faith based infant/toddler caregivers and directors all around the state.

New relationships, collaborations, and partnerships have developed among the 45 key staff resulting in a better understanding among participants of the many different perspectives in the early childhood community including Head Start, South Carolina Department of Education, the ABC Child Care Program, South Carolina Department of Social Services, private and faith based community, First Steps, USC and faculty at the state's 2-year and 4-year institutions.

ABC Child Care Program staff (Certified WestEd PITC Trainer) wrote 3 manuals to assist South Carolina infant toddler grant recipients in planning and setting up appropriate environments for infants and toddlers. WestEd faculty provided technical assistance with the review and editing of the manuals developed from the WestEd PITC information. The 3 manuals were: *Setting Up a Room for Infants (0-12 months)*, *Setting Up a Room for Young Toddlers (12-24 months)* and *Setting Up a Room for Older Toddlers (24-36 months)*. These manuals have been revised based on the first 2 years of use and a fourth manual has been created to specifically address the needs of the family and group providers (*Setting Up a Family/Group Home for 0-36 Months*). These manuals were made available to the County First Steps Offices for their use.

ABC Enhanced Child Care Providers receiving an infant/toddler grant from the ABC Child Care Program must attend training provided by ABC Child Care staff who are certified in the WestEd modules I, II, III, and IV. This training is registered with the SC Center for Child Care Career Development for credit toward the continuing education requirements of SC child care licensing. So, infant toddler grants are awarded and infant toddler PITC training and manuals for setting up environments guide the wise expenditure of the funds. The ABC Child Care Program monitors not only provide the PITC Training in three regions of the state at no cost to the provider, but are also available to provide additional technical assistance to the infant toddler grant recipients.

The last phase of the WestEd PITC initiative with the University of South Carolina in partnership with ABC Program Staff transitions in two summer sessions (one session for Module I and II, summer 2003, and the other session for Modules III and IV, summer 2004) toward a stronger role for South Carolina in the West Ed partnership through use of distance education and greatly reduces the cost of providing the training.

The WestEd Program for Infant Toddler Caregivers

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:: The PITC Philosophy

**Good infant care is neither baby-sitting nor preschool.
It is a special kind of care that resembles no other.**

The Program for Infant/Toddler Caregivers (PITC) approach equates good care with trained caregivers who are preparing themselves and the environment so that infants can learn. For care to be good, it must explore ways to help caregivers get "in tune" with each infant they serve and learn from the individual infant what he or she needs, thinks, and feels.

Infant care should be based on relationship planning -- not lesson planning -- and should emphasize child-directed learning over adult-directed learning. Rather than detailing specific lessons for caregivers to conduct with infants, the PITC approach shows caregivers ways of helping infants learn the lessons that every infant comes into the world eager to learn.

The PITC philosophy also sees the setting for care as critical. Therefore, it helps caregivers design environments that ensure safety, offer infants appropriate developmental challenges, and promote optimum health for children. An equally important program component is the strengthening of the child's developing family and cultural identity by making meaningful connections between child care and the child's family and culture.

PITC: A Relationship-Based Curriculum

The goal of PITC is to help caregivers recognize the crucial importance of giving tender, loving care and assisting in the infants' intellectual development through an attentive reading of each child's cues. The PITC videos, guides, and manuals are designed to help child care managers and caregivers become sensitive to infants' cues, connect with their family and culture, and develop responsive, relationship-based care. The training materials provide the foundation for a style of care in which caregivers study the infants in their care, reflect on and record information about the children's interests and skills, and search for ways to set the stage for the child's next learning encounters.

Four program policies anchor PITC work: primary caregiving; continuity of care; small groups; and following children's individual schedules. These policies create a climate for care that reinforces the PITC responsive, relationship based approach. They allow relationships to develop and deepen over time between caregivers and the children as well as between caregivers and their families.



